



the Socialist

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#fastfoodrights #M29

NO TO JUNK JOBS

Pay us at least **£10 an hr**



Claire-Laker Mansfield
Youth Fight for Jobs

“People are often surprised by the employee benefits on offer. All of our team earn at least the national minimum wage”. So proudly boasts the UK website for multi-billion pound fast food chain McDonalds.

Well, thank you McDonalds. With fantastic ‘benefits’ like that it’s no wonder that your “happy employees make happy customers”. But try not to be surprised if we don’t jump for joy at news of the ‘flexible’ (aka zero-hour) employment you so generously provide.

Try not to be shocked if we don’t think your (supposed) commitment to provide the statutory minimums makes you a ‘model employer’. And

definitely don’t expect that workers will just put up with it. Because we’re ready for a fightback!

Youth Fight for Jobs has been campaigning for real jobs - with guaranteed hours, a living wage and trade union rights - since we were set up in 2009. Now, we’re teaming up with the Bakers’ Food and Allied Workers’ Union (BFAWU) as part of the Fast Food Rights coalition. Our aim: to help workers get organised to fight back.

On Saturday 29 March, a national day of action will see protests organised in towns and cities all over the country. We’re naming and shaming zero-hour and low wage employers. And we won’t just be protesting outside. We aim to talk to and discuss with as many workers as possible - to help give people the confidence that comes with knowing you’re not

on your own.

We’re also organising public meetings for employees to come along to. We’ll be discussing how trade unions can help us to win better conditions at work, and what lessons we can draw from the past experiences of workers.

In America, fast food workers have led a spectacular campaign against exploitation. Their demands - for \$15 an hour and a union - have rocked the multinationals and shaken the political establishment.

The election of Socialist Kshama Sawant as a Seattle city councillor, which came on the back of support for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, shows that a campaign like this can change the political climate.

In Britain, the Con-Dems are trying to blame young people for the dire situation this government, and

their failed capitalist system, has left us in. We are told that we should not be ‘job snobs’ - that we should be grateful to companies like McDonalds for offering us a ‘leg up’ in the world of work.

But in Youth Fight for Jobs we think the ‘gratitude deficit’ is on the side of employers. Every year McDonalds, Subway and Sports Direct make billions in profit. Their shareholders and executives can afford a champagne and caviar lifestyle. But the workers who flip burgers, make coffee and serve customers get shafted. It’s time to fight back. We’re demanding a living wage of £10 hour, guaranteed hours and trade unions to represent us.

The establishment parties of Cameron, Clegg and Miliband all, ultimately, represent the interests of the employer. So if the capitalist

system can’t deliver decent living standards and rights for us, we need to change the system.

Join us for protests around the country on Saturday 29 March and help us build the fightback

See www.youthfightforjobs.com for list of protests

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what we think

2014 Budget: Millionaire Osborne dishes out more misery for majority

For the fifth year in a row the budget delivered by multi-millionaire Chancellor George Osborne has meted out misery for the majority in Britain.

Despite headlines about economic recovery, the budget recognised that Britain's economy remains 15% smaller than it would have been had growth continued at pre-recession rates, and that the lost growth is never going to be recovered. Even the government's own quango, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), has been forced to point that out.

As we have repeatedly warned, the government's claims that cuts in public services were essential to cut the national debt have once again been proven to be nonsense – the national debt has continued to rise.

Osborne's answer, of course, is to just keep repeating the failed recipe, adding extra austerity. He is planning ever greater quantities of cuts for the next parliament as he fails to meet his own impossible targets in this one. He's confident that the Labour front bench won't object.

Health service workers, along with others in the public sector, have suffered a 10% pay cut in real terms over the last four years, but are now being told their wages will be squeezed even harder this year.

Spending on benefits, including housing benefit and tax credits – already slashed, resulting in a huge increase in hunger and homelessness – is now to be capped. Labour

actually claims authorship of this measure.

A year before the election, the budget did contain a few 'crowd pleasers' but these were overwhelmingly aimed at shoring up the core Tory vote rather than helping the majority.

It is true that the point at which workers have to start to pay the basic rate of tax was increased, saving many workers a few hundred pounds a year, while the price of a pint was lowered by a penny, but these puny measures will do nothing to compensate for continued pay restraint and rising living costs.

There were some changes to ISAs to help savers, and a number of measures to make it easier for pensioners to save, spend and invest savings. Both measures are mainly aimed at better-off pensioners, who are more likely to be Tory voters, and whose savings have been squeezed by ultra-low interest rates over the last few years.

Masterstroke

Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson described the measure as "Thatcherite in its elegance" and it has been hailed by the right-wing media as a 'masterstroke'. Similar to Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' it makes individuals and the 'market' responsible for pensions, not government.

It is not clear how 'real' these measures are however; the £10 million a year – and only for two years – allocated to fund them is very small. The much hyped-measures to

assist parents with childcare costs have also had a mere £25 million a year allocated to them, and has already been dubbed 'au pair benefit' because it seems likely to mainly help the richest parents.

Alongside these cynical electoral ploys, Osborne also announced a number of measures which he claims would encourage the capitalists to invest their profits into developing industry.

However, these small measures will not act to significantly increase investment – which has fallen by 20% since 2008. This is not because of a lack of profits – on the contrary just last October government minister Danny Alexander was begging British companies to 'invest the £500 billion' [others have said £850 billion] cash pile they are sitting on.

They have not done so because they do not consider it would be sufficiently profitable. Instead the growth in the UK economy is driven by a re-inflating of the financial bubbles that burst to trigger the 2008 crash.

The extension of the Help to Buy scheme until 2020 will fuel this, pushing property prices further out of the reach of working class people.

No worker who has experienced five years of Con-Dem government could be surprised by Osborne's latest cuts budget. The tragedy is that there is no mass party putting an alternative.

Labour has once again shown it is another

party of big business and the bankers. While Miliband correctly described Osborne's budget as, 'of the privileged, for the privileged', Labour puts forward nothing fundamentally different. This is what's behind the levelling out of support for the main capitalist parties in the polls – the Tories are hated but Labour offers no alternative.

Labour's siren voices oppose a 'safety-first' election programme but offer nothing meaningful to the overwhelming majority of people suffering under austerity.

If Labour was to pledge a mass council house building programme, or an increase in the minimum wage to £10 an hour, it would be massively popular. Instead, after five years of Con-Dem misery, shadow chancellor Ed Balls has promised further 'ruthless' public spending cuts. Labour has agreed to a cap on benefit spending, and has promised to be 'tougher' on welfare than the Tories.

The 2014 budget is yet more proof that we urgently need to create a political voice that represents the interests of the millions, not the millionaires.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), bringing together trade unionists, socialists and anti-cuts campaigners is a step in that direction. In the local elections on 22 May, TUSC will be contesting more seats than any challenge to the left of Labour in over half a century.

If Osborne's budget – and Balls bland agreement with it – made you angry, join us!

A socialist alternative to the austerity parties

Socialists in Coventry are preparing to contest every seat in the May council elections.

Former councillor Dave Nellist, who held St Michael's for 14 years for the Socialist Party, said: "Both parties on the council support an austerity budget that's cut hundreds of jobs and allowed millions of pounds to be lost to our city, without any sort of real protest.

"It matters little whether Labour speaks of making Coalition cuts 'with a heavy heart' – cuts made with enthusiasm or an aching heart hurt just the same."

Socialist candidates are opposing Coventry council's plans for a further £19 million worth of cuts in local spending; demanding a £10 an hour national minimum wage; that the council draw up plans for thousands of new homes to cut lengthy waiting lists; and insisting that the 'bedroom tax' be scrapped now.

Dave added that Trade Union-



Dave Nellist photo Paul Mattsson

ist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaigners would use the election period to demand free parking at Walsgrave Hospital, and for current PFI and privatisation contracts in the NHS to be cancelled.

TUSC will launch its citywide challenge on Wednesday 26 March at Coventry's Methodist Central Hall, 7.30 pm

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance that stands candidates against all cuts and privatisation. It involves the RMT transport union, leading members of other unions and socialists including the Socialist Party. This May TUSC plans to stand hundreds of no-cuts candidates in the council elections against all the austerity parties voting through the destruction of jobs and services. Could you be a candidate? See tusc.org.uk

Unison should back anti-cuts candidates

Unison member
Swansea

"The Chancellor wanted to put clear blue water between him and Labour," was the assessment of Unison's general secretary, Dave Prentis, on George Osborne's budget.

However, Labour's would-be 'iron chancellor', Ed Balls, soon made sure that no blue water opened up between the Con-Dems and Labour. In the week of the budget he promised that Labour would be "ruthless" in cutting public spending.

Prentis rightly states that Unison members and their families can't wait until 2018 to reverse our declining living standards. But we want to see these words backed up with action; the coming union conferences need to be 'councils of war' to take on the

Con-Dems and the employers now. Never mind 2018, we can't wait until next year's general election!

If Labour's commitment to austerity isn't enough to convince Unison leaders that Labour isn't on our side, then consider what one Labour-led authority is doing here in Wales. Carmarthenshire is taking away all union secondments from 1 April, threatening representation for the County's 4,000 Unison members.

Labour councillors vote for cuts to our jobs and services; now they vote to attack union rights and representation. Unison must break with the Labour Party that has gone over entirely to the side of the employers. We should stop funding this third bosses' party.

If our union's leadership prevents the membership from discussing and voting on disaffiliating from Labour

then we need to build an effective campaign from below, organising members to check which political fund they pay into and encouraging them to switch from the affiliated fund to the general political fund.

Disaffiliating from Labour is only half the battle though. Until Unison members are able to democratically decide to back candidates in elections who are committed to vote against all cuts, such as Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates, then we won't have a full armoury of weapons to use in the fight to save jobs and services.

• Sign the petition to demand Carmarthenshire's Labour-led council rethink ending all union secondments: <http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/carmarthenshire-council-labour-leader-kevin-madge-reinstate-trade-union-secondments>



Canvassing for Keith Morell and other TUSC candidates in Southampton on 23 March photo Nick Chaffey

Doncaster care workers standing for TUSC

Doncaster care workers – who have been forced into taking two seven-day strikes to prevent their ruthless employer, Care UK, imposing new contracts with devastating pay cuts – are standing as anti-cuts TUSC candidates in May's council elections.

They include: striking Care UK worker Greg Beaumont (Edenthorpe), strike supporter Jason Fawley (Adwick) and RDASH Unison stewards Rob Green (Wheatley) and Steve Williams (Conisbrough).

Killed asylum seeker - victim of racism and privatisation

Becci Heagney

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has announced that, nearly four years after the death of Jimmy Mubenga, three guards will now face manslaughter charges. Mubenga died on a plane at Heathrow Airport while facing deportation to Angola in 2010. Witnesses on the plane had seen G4S guards holding his head down while he was shouting that he could not breathe – he was later declared dead from cardio-respiratory collapse.

This is a huge U-turn by the CPS. Previously, after a 17 month investigation, they decided in 2012 that despite Mubenga's death being caused by the way he was restrained, there was "insufficient evidence" to bring about charges. Mubenga's family had carried out a tireless campaign for justice, including a letter to the CPS earlier this year demanding action.

Deportation of asylum seekers is carried out by private security firms in the UK. At the time of Mubenga's death the contract had been awarded to the notorious G4S. A number of employees blew the whistle about the "potentially lethal force" that was being used during deportations and several studies into various security firms show that violence is endemic, not just the actions of a few individuals. Reliance took over the contract later in 2010 and one of their internal memos referred to "aggressive and loudish" behaviour of their staff.

One of the dangers of the privatisation of services like this is that greedy companies cut corners in their quest for profit. A report by the



Home secretary Theresa May. The government pulled the plug on G4S's contract to deport asylum seekers after the death of Jimmy Mubenga but awarded the company new contracts to detain, transport and house asylum seekers

coroner investigating Mubenga's death found that G4S employees were employed on zero-hour contracts and were 'rewarded' with extra pay if they were able to keep detainees quiet before planes took off.

On top of this, staff were not qualified and were encouraged to carry out dangerous restraint techniques such as the one which killed Mubenga.

Sadly, this is not an isolated incident for asylum seekers in Britain. Many complaints have been made about the "degrading behaviour"

that vulnerable people, including torture victims, are subjected to in institutions such as the Asylum Screening Unit. This, coupled with racist government policies and the establishment parties promising to be "tough on immigration", mean that the voices of asylum seekers are not heard.

Socialists defend the right to asylum and completely oppose private security firms running any of our services, which should be publicly owned, accountable and run democratically.



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Pensions: Osborne's 'counter-revolution'

The right-wing media has been falling over itself to heap praise on George Osborne's "pension revolution". This follows the Chancellor's relaxation of rules regarding private pensions.

From April 2015, people over 55 with a defined contributions pension scheme will be able to take all their pension savings in one lump sum instead of having to purchase annuities, which pay a regular income. Rachel Reeves, Labour's shadow work and pensions secretary, supports Osborne's changes.

Lib Dem pensions minister Steve Webb enthused that elderly people could now blow their pension pots on a Lamborghini sports car (cheapest model £114,000!) if they wished to.

Like their Tory counterparts it only goes to show how out of touch the Lib Dem MPs are. As the National Pensioners Convention points out, nearly one-third of workers retire with less than £1,500 in savings.

Moreover, the majority of people in the government's new occupational self-enrolment pension scheme will be lucky to get £36,000 after a lifetime of contributions. As Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary, says: "Forget buying a Lamborghini - at this rate pensioners will be lucky to afford a Reliant Robin".

Barely mentioned in the media's

budget reports was the incorporation of elderly people's fuel allowance, cold weather payments and Christmas bonus into the government's welfare cap, which leaves them vulnerable to future cuts.

Another detail of the 'pension revolution' is that if people take their pension pot in one lump sum, everything over £25,000 will be taxable as income. And of course there will be no shortage of con-artists waiting to pounce on unsuspecting people with 'investment opportunity' scams.

All the talk of 'liberating pensions' conveniently overlooks the stark reality that many occupational final salary pension schemes have been closed to new entrants, revised to cost more in contributions but pay out less, or have been scrapped by employers altogether.

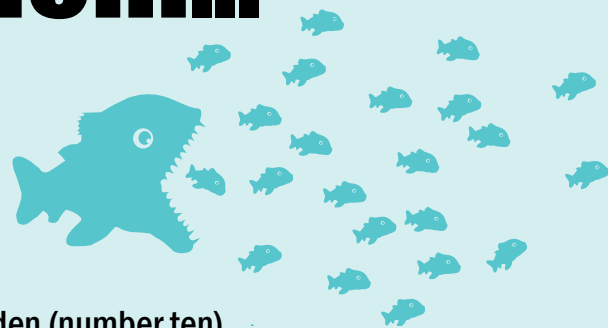
Public sector workers' final salary pension schemes are going the same way, and the state pension retirement age has been increased and is likely to be fur-

ther increased. Aside from a minority of very wealthy pensioners who might benefit, Osborne's 'pensions revolution' has all the markings of a 'counter-revolution'.

Dave Carr



Them...



David's den (number ten)

Tory chairman and housing minister Grant Shapps has defended his party's patronising 'bingo and beer' poster, which was distributed immediately after the Budget. Trumpeting Osborne's 10% cut in bingo industry profits tax and 1p off beer duty, the Tory poster condescendingly proclaims: "To help hardworking people do more of the things they enjoy." Presumably, this is instead of continually worrying about how to pay the rent, mortgage, soaring utility bills, etc. The use of the pronoun "they" instead of "we" betrays the sneering class snobbery of the Tories to the 'great unwashed'. Even if the tax cut leads to bigger bingo prizes, you still have to win! And even if publicans pass on to customers the 1p cut in beer duty, how many pints must you drink to make any substantial saving? The most remarkable aspect of the bingo and beer poster is the Tories actually believing that people will buy into their trivial election sops and ignore the government's further savaging of public services and welfare cuts.

Boris reassuringly told the London Assembly: "No one wants to see water cannon deployed routinely on the streets of London" - a relief if you happen to be popping into the local cafe!

House of shame

Britain's house and flat renting crisis is getting worse, especially in London where prices are going stratospheric. If wages had kept up with house prices, the average salary in the gentrified but still mainly working class London borough of Hackney would need to be £131,924 a year! Even some Tory newspapers have reported on people who are living in expensive but tiny, mould-ridden rented flats. But little outrage is heard from our 'representatives' in the mother of parliaments. Why? One reason could be that while 2% of Britain's population earn income from buy-to-let properties, that figure rises to 25% when you look at MPs in Westminster.

Ducking the issue

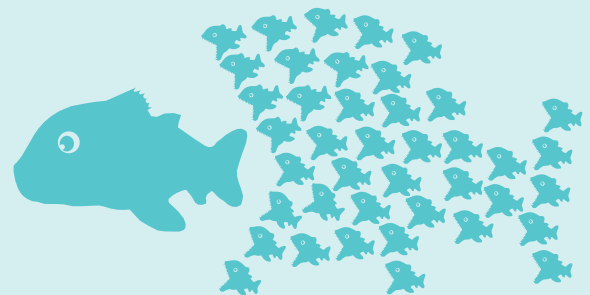
I don't know if you've followed the scandal here in South Africa over the 215 million rand of public money spent to 'upgrade' president Zuma's private residence. Leaders of the ruling African National Congress claim this expenditure was for security but the public prosecutor has found that to be largely nonsense.

Some of the installations included a cattle kraal [enclosure] and a chicken run! When the architect was asked on what grounds these could be charged to the public purse he said, "this is how they do it in England". An obvious reference to the MPs' expenses scandal back in 2009, highlighted by a Tory MP's claim for a 'duck house'.

So UK MPs have become a model for the corrupt ANC!

Sean, South Africa

...& Us



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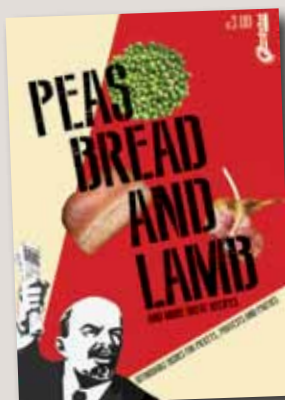




photo Senan

Trade unionists and socialists line the streets of Bob Crow’s funeral in tribute

Teachers must fight on to stop Gove

Martin Powell-Davies
Member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) executive

Education secretary Michael Gove still wants to cut teachers’ pay, pensions and conditions and our children’s education. He is still refusing to hold any meaningful talks.

That is why NUT members are on strike on 26 March. And that is why we have to build on the strike with a programme of further action which will stop Gove in his tracks. 26 March must not be an isolated protest strike - it must provide the basis for a campaign to intensify the action.

In 2011 national strike action on pensions did force some concessions - eg making sure those aged 50 + can retire at 60 on their full pension. However, winning any further serious concessions on pensions, performance pay and workload will

require further serious action. 26 March must be a starting point for more strike action next term.

- Gove’s attacks, which Labour has made clear they will continue, makes it even more urgent to elect a fighting leadership for the NUT with a clear programme of how to defend teachers’ pay and conditions and education itself. Martin is standing for election as NUT general secretary. The election starts in June.

Voting papers are also being distributed now for the Inner London district seat on the NUT executive which Martin currently occupies. Socialist Party members Jane Nellist, Phil Clarke and Peter Glover are also standing for seats on the executive.

For election material and more on the strike see Martin’s blog on: electmartin1.blogspot.com



The NSSN joins the protest over the death of Kevin Campbell on the Docklands Light Railway site, 46 from Poplar, in East London who was killed on 2 March on a Docklands Light Railway project in Stratford. Kevin was struck by a piece of machinery that was attached to an excavator. The fatality came in the same month as a worker was killed on the £15bn Crossrail project. Also a worker on Balfour Beatty’s Providence tower site in London’s docklands was seriously injured after a crane collapse.
photo Paul Mattsson

Doncaster care workers determined to win



Doncaster Care picket line photo A Tice

Alistair Tice

Over 100 Doncaster Care UK workers, members of Unison, started their second seven-day strike on 19 March. The strike was solid and has forced the company to put back the deadline for signing the buy-out agreement to 7 April and to say that staff will not lose their jobs if they don’t sign. During the strike, pickets publicly burnt the new contracts.

Last year, Doncaster Labour-led council awarded the Supported Living Service contract to the lowest bidder rather than continue with the NHS. Care UK have torn up the TUPE transfer agreement and want to slash holidays, sick pay and unsociable hours payments,

meaning an average pay cut of 35%. New staff are being employed on as little as the bare minimum wage!

Unison members balloted 97% in favour of strike action, the first seven days ending on 5 March.

This bold industrial action has inspired trade unionists around the country with donations pouring in from Unison and other trade union branches.

On 25 March strikers voted 95:1 to strike for 3 days and then four days in April.

Send messages of support to admin@unison-dab.org.uk and send donations/cheques, made out to ‘Doncaster, District & Bassetlaw Health Branch’, to Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5GJ

In brief



HCA strike

Over 68% of Unite members at the Homes and Communities Agency voted for strike action over the divisive and unfair way that the Agency has chosen to allocate pay. Workers on HCA contracts are being treated differently from those transferred from the old Tenant Services Authority. The Agency has so far failed to negotiate in a meaningful way on this key issue.

As a result they were on strike on 25-27 March, with picket lines in London and Manchester.



Royal Mail

Only months after Royal Mail was privatised the company has announced 1,600 job cuts. The jobs are mostly managerial and head office but only 300 new jobs are being created. Unite, which represents the majority of the workers affected, has demanded a commitment for no compulsory redundancies and effective methods of redeployment. The union will consider a ballot for industrial action if Royal Mail refuses to make such a commitment.

The CWU discussed the situation at its Postal Executive on 25 March and has pledged to fight to “protect as many jobs as possible”.

Royal Mail has cut 11,000 jobs in eleven years as part of a lengthy restructuring. The cut-price sell-off, which saw shares rise almost 80% over its offer price, has not prevented further job losses. This is on top of an above-inflation rise in the price of stamps this year.

Prison officers’ demo

Prison officers, members of POA, from around the country gathered in Westminster on 19 March for a march and rally.

The prison service has taken massive cuts since the austerity offensive against the public sector began in 2008. This has led to a worsening of conditions in prisons for prison officers and prisoners alike.

A rally was held in Methodist Central Hall where the POA were joined by, among others, Matt Wrack from the FBU, Chris Baugh from PCS, Ian Lawrence from Napo, John McDonald MP, Kevin Maguire from The Daily Mirror and National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams.

Like much of the rest of the public sector the prison service is menaced by privatisation with a number of prisons, such as HMP Northumberland, now run by private companies. On this question the POA president was absolutely clear: “To make money off the misery of others is immoral”.

Neil Cafferky

Defaults reveal student debt madness

Dan Celardi

Sheffield Socialist Students

Universities minister David Willetts has been forced to admit that student debt defaults are currently at about 45%. He also estimates that once the figure reaches about 48.6%, then the money saved from the fee rises in 2010 is counterbalanced by unpaid loans.

This clearly exposes the myth that fee rises were about economic efficiency in austerity Britain. It shows the fundamental motive was a further marketisation of higher education. It demonstrates that it was about trying to scrap any notion of education as a public good.

When the Con-Dems forced through the tripling of tuition fees to a maximum £9,000 a year, they were faced with demonstrations and occupations involving hundreds of thousands of students. Supposedly the system was unaffordable and students were going to have to cough up more towards the cost of university.

Earnings threshold

But the vast majority of students still financed fees through student loans – which have always been paid back only when earning over a certain amount.

While the amount of debt went up, the amount of money coming in actually went down because

The potential sell-off of the Student Loan Book (SLB) is a further sign of what the government's motivation for all these changes is. The sell-off will allow private debt firms to make a profit on student loans. The sale of the mortgage-style loans at the end of last year shows the trajectory the SLB is heading in. These loans, dating from 1990 to 1998 have very low repayment rates, of around 14%.

Although that loan book was worth nearly £900 million, it was sold off for a meagre £160 million. The debt firm will be looking to make a mark-up on this and the government is clearly using private enterprise to re-structure loan repayments while turning the blame away from themselves.

this threshold was increased from £15,000 to £21,000 (undoubtedly a concession to the pressure of the movement against the fee rise).

No surprise

After 30 years any remaining debt is written off – in fact the government always accounted for 30% of the loans never being repaid.

It is no surprise that estimates suggest today's students are likely to default on their debts. Coming out of university, students are faced with the grim reality of unemployment, zero-hour contracts and low pay.

Capitalism offers no hope for



graduates and little chance of being able to pay their loans back. As all three main parties are committed to cuts and privatisations, this figure will no doubt keep on rising.

It is unlikely that this startling revelation will change the minds of the Coalition on the issue of fees however. Universities can expect to have

further cuts to their already dwindling budgets from central government.

There is a widening layer of university management that seems to think that un-capped fees are the solution. There are those who think that lowering the level at which graduates begin to pay their loan back is the answer.

The crisis in higher education funding proves fees and loans are simply not working and need to be scrapped with the introduction of free education and living grants.

Jobmatch: yet another fiasco of privatisation

In the two years since its introduction, the Universal Jobmatch website has been riddled with problems. Originally this was written off as "teething problems". But it has emerged that the site, which is mandatory for many people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance, is beginning to fall apart.

Costing £17 million to develop as well as £5 million a year to maintain, the site, although operating under a government name, and in conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), is run by the US-based private company Monster Worldwide.

Out of control

It is estimated that 350,000 (60%) of the 600,000 jobs posted since Jobmatch's launch have been fake, or a scam. This is because anyone can add a job to the listings, which has led to a lucrative market for identity thieves and organised crime.

There are several examples of job seekers being conned out of £65 for a CRB check for a fictitious job, or of people's passport, national insurance number and other personal details being accessed and used

to commit fraud.

There has also been controversy surrounding several 'inappropriate' jobs being posted including adverts for pornography 'actresses' and mafia hit men. These were exposed on social media as fakes, but show the complete lack of control that the DWP has over this 'monster'.

Failing

Another worrying trend is the amount of 'commission only' jobs, which are highly exploitative and can lead to people being paid far below the minimum wage.

These failings, coupled with massive cuts to the DWP, mean that this system is failing the people that it was supposedly designed to get back into employment. This is the latest in a long line of Con-Dem projects that has gone into meltdown. It is yet more evidence that making public sector workers redundant and hiring private contractors is bad for everyone apart from the private contractors.

Although the government is heralding a drop in the unemployment rate, zero-hour contracts and massive underemployment is



photo Paul Mattsson

masking what life is really like. It has been revealed that the DWP is likely to terminate Monster's contract early, and while that means that the mess that Universal Jobmatch has become will come to an end, it means that tens

of millions of pounds will be handed to another contractor to create a new system.

We must fight for a real alternative of job creation, proper training and decent wages.

Gareth Bromhall

Young people: alienated, not apathetic

In the last general election, less than half of 18-24 year olds voted and recent research from the Office of National Statistics showed only 31% of young people aged 16-24 are "fairly" or "very" interested in politics.

A huge proportion of the electorate is likely not to vote at the next election, following the trend of a decline in youth voting figures. With so much 'apathy', young people seem like an odd choice to put your faith in as the new driving force of socialism, but to me - it's the only choice.

Why is it that so few young people vote? A sense of alienation, a lack of hope and most of all, a feeling of powerlessness. As a young person, my activism is often met by total indifference.

Youth have so much to fight for. But the truth is that for young people none of the major parties offer anything - Tory austerity or Labour austerity, take your pick.

The one party who may have seemed to be offering an alternative for students at the last general election had a greater following from young people than the others. But that love was short-lived, and the Lib Dems soon sold us out to the Tories and agreed to increasing the cap on tuition fees to £9,000 a year.

Working class young people have been hit hard by austerity. Youth unemployment has soared while the welfare budget is slashed and students have to pay through the nose to attend university.

We have witnessed Tory austerity first hand, we have watched as the Lib Dems betray us, we are untainted by memories of "old" Labour. "Generation me" are not selfish, or entitled, or even apathetic. "Generation me" is abandoned.

That is why I believe in fighting for a socialist future with the help of young people.

Matt Wilson-Boddy

Leeds protest: stop the student loan sell-off

On budget day 25 students came to protest the privatisation of the Student Loan Company at Leeds University. The protest, which started outside the student union, turned into an impromptu march around campus.

Socialist Students members from Leeds Metropolitan and Leeds University gave out leaflets and spoke to students and staff, attracting interest and solidarity from both. The

chief executive of Leeds University Union even approached the protest to express his support for the action!

People agreed with Socialist Students that we have to link the sell-off to all the cuts within higher education (such as those being made to Leeds University's School of Healthcare), as well as to the demands for free education and the cancelling of all student debt.

This was just the start of the cam-

paign – many students don't yet know about the privatisation or the implications that it could have. But the number of people who attended at such short notice, and the positive response, are testament to the anger that exists and the potential for an effective campaign against the privatisation of student debt.

Plans were already being made while still on the protest for future action, and there was a good meet-

ing later that day to discuss the way forward for the campaign. A date has been set for the next protest and more organising meetings are planned, hopefully in coordination with other groups on campus and with the other universities in Leeds.

We look forward to seeing similar campaigns develop across the country!

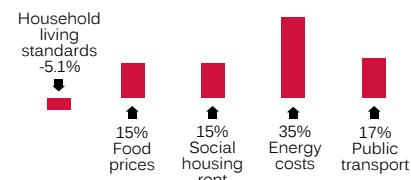
Mary Finch
Leeds Socialist Students

FIGHT FOR A £10 AN HOUR MINIMUM WAGE

Judy Beishon
Socialist Party executive committee

Under the Con-Dem government, households at every income level have had a fall in living standards, declared the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). This is no surprise to most people, only too aware that wage levels have been stagnant while prices have rocketed upwards - between May 2010 and January 2014, food prices increased by 15%, social housing rent by 15%, energy costs by 35% and public transport by 17%.

Those at the bottom of the income scale have suffered the most, with a 5.1% drop in household living standards, greater than other income levels.



Poverty pay is endemic, an outrage that the trade union movement urgently needs to collectively fight - above all to secure above inflation pay increases that will start to reverse the decline in living standards. In addition, the movement needs to fight for a minimum wage that people at the bottom end of the pay scale can actually live on.

The legal scandal of people on the minimum wage working 35 hours a week or more, yet not earning enough money to live on, is insupportable - what an indictment of British capitalism that hundreds of thousands of workers are stuck in that trap. And for the hundreds of thousands more on the minimum wage who are only offered part-time hours, the struggle to survive can be even harder.

As with the wages of most workers in the public sector, the minimum wage has risen by less than inflation since the onset of the economic crisis six years ago, making it even harder to get by on. The Resolution Foundation calculated that it is now worth £1,010 a year less than in 2008.

The Low Pay Commission argues that the minimum wage has, however, provided some protection for the lowest paid, because it has risen relative to median earnings during that time. But rather than resulting in a better position for workers on the minimum wage, this is an indication of the 'race to the bottom' being pursued by many bosses across the UK, an overall driving down of wage levels for the majority in society while the rich have become richer.

Recent studies by the Resolution Foundation confirm that many employees start work on the minimum wage and then remain on it for years, as it has become the 'going rate' in some sectors. The studies also show that a large number of workers earn barely more than minimum wage: About 1.2 million workers are paid the minimum wage or no more than 5p above it, and a further 1.4 million earn no more than 50p an hour more. Altogether, five million workers are classified as low-paid, earning below £7.71 an hour, which is two-thirds of the median full-time hourly wage - the OECD's definition of low pay.

"The minimum wage is not a living wage: a living wage aims to assess needs

Neither Labour nor the Tories will increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without a Seattle-style campaign spreading across the country

and to provide enough for an employee and their dependants to live on, whereas the NMW [national minimum wage] aims to provide a wage floor which is affordable for business", restated the Low Pay Commission in a March 2014 report.

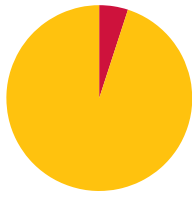
The report goes on to say that the tax and benefits system has to plug the gap so that workers can survive. But the government's onslaught on benefits and services has wreaked catastrophe; people in work as well as the unemployed and incapacitated are losing their homes, living without heating and resorting to food banks. The IFS calculated that families are on average £891 worse off this year due to tax and benefit changes imposed since 2010.

What about the raising of the tax threshold, has that helped those on the minimum wage? The Low Pay Commission has pointed out that 56% of workers on the minimum wage have not had an increase in real take-home pay in the 2013-14 financial year, because they don't work enough hours for the tax change to have compensated for inflation (many were not earning enough to pay tax in the first place).

Real 'living wage'

How much should a 'living wage' be? A minimum of £7.65 an hour is the present estimate for a minimum acceptable quality of life (if state benefits are claimed on top) as calculated by a research unit at Loughborough university, and promoted by the Living Wage Foundation. However, the Resolution Foundation has drawn attention to the fact that £7.65 is a capped, compromise figure, in order to stop the 'living wage' from rising each year much faster than average earnings. Without the capping it would be £9.08 an hour!

Separately, the Greater London Authority estimates that a living wage for London would at present be £8.80 an hour, and pays this as a minimum to its own workforce. This figure would need to be £11.30 an hour if means-tested benefits are excluded from income (tax credits, housing benefits, council tax benefits).



A small minority of councils, just 22 so far (that's less than 5%), have been accredited by the Living Wage Foundation as paying at least a living wage.

A number of trade unions campaign for employers to pay a living wage as a bottom line rather than the minimum wage. There have been important campaigns and struggles of workers for this, with it being won in some cases. A small minority of councils, just 22 so far, have been accredited by the Living Wage Foundation as paying at least a living wage. Cleaners in the houses of parliament and on the London underground have won battles for the living wage, as have cleaners and porters at the Royal Opera House.

While defending the existence of the national minimum wage and welcoming every increase, the Socialist Party calls for it to be immediately increased to the level of the living wage, so that it won't be at the whim of individual employers whether or not they abide by it.

The Tory Party opposed the introduction of the minimum wage in 1999 and

many Tories and representatives of bosses' organisations like the CBI howl in protest when increases are discussed each year. In trying to ward off any infringements to their profits, they threaten that if forced to pay a higher minimum wage they will cut the size of their workforce or reduce workers' hours. They also argue that it can fuel inflation and reduce investment.

These are sham arguments when considering that the real value of UK wages has fallen by over 7% since the start of 2008, while the wealth of the top 1% is unprecedented and the top companies are hoarding mountains of cash. Also, the Low Pay Commission's March 2014 report draws attention to the long-term fall in the share of national income which goes to wages, stating that in the 1960s and 1970s it averaged around 59% but now fluctuates at around 54%.

Oxfam reported on 17 March that the country's five richest families now own more wealth than the poorest 20% of the population, ie 12.6 million people. "Since 2003 the majority of the British public (95%) have seen a 12% real terms drop in their disposable income after housing costs, while the richest 5% of the population have seen their disposable income increase". More working households are in poverty than non-working ones, was one of Oxfam's findings.

The Low Pay Commission concludes from its many studies that there has been no evidence of "adverse employment effects" in the 14 years since the minimum wage was brought in. Many proponents of a higher minimum wage point out that it would help to boost the economy by increasing consumer spending; workers spend most of their money on essentials whereas the richest in society have large amounts away in financial products, savings, property, artworks, etc. Increased wages also boost the government's tax and national insurance receipts and lower its outgoings on means-tested benefits.

Furthermore, the Living Wage Foundation reported on a study that found that 80% of businesses in London with a policy of paying the living wage believe it had "enhanced the quality of the work of their staff" and absenteeism had fallen by around 25%. Two thirds of employers reported a significant impact on recruitment and retention.

Capitalism's contradictions

Substantially increasing the minimum wage and the wages of all working class and middle class earners will not solve the capitalist system's fundamental problems. Its inherent contradictions, as explained by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, will remain until a powerful enough workers' movement - with a mass workers' party - takes society into its own hands, removing all capitalist relations and organising society on a democratic socialist basis. Nor will such increases bring about any lasting improvements for workers; history has proved that any gains have to be fought for time and time again in the battle between the classes in society, for as long as capitalism lasts.

But while recognising these facts and spreading socialist ideas, we fight for all gains that can be made, including for a minimum wage at a higher rate than one allowing only the lowest 'acceptable' standard of living. There is easily enough wealth in capitalist Britain to provide a minimum wage that could also deliver comforts, security, leisure pursuits and entertainments, as well as much higher wages further up the pay scale to recog-

nise skills and experience. So while arguing for the immediate introduction of the 'living wage', the Socialist Party also calls for trade union struggle to bring about an increase in the minimum wage beyond that, to £10 an hour. That figure would need to be reviewed and increased as the cost of living rises - the lowest paid are the least able earners to bear the consequences of inflation.

Any large company that refuses to implement an increased minimum or that threatens to lay off workers should be taken into public ownership so that decent jobs can be guaranteed. Any small businesses, however, that would genuinely struggle to pay a higher minimum, should be eligible for assistance from public funds. A higher minimum wage needs to be part of a programme of other measures to help low paid workers, including a major investment in job creation, rent

Present minimum wage rates

- £6.31 an hour for workers aged 21 and over, increasing to £6.50 in October
- £5.03 an hour for workers aged 18 - 20, increasing to £5.13 in October
- £3.72 for workers under 18, increasing to £3.79 in October
- £2.68 for some categories of 'apprentice', increasing to £2.73 in October



controls and construction of new publicly owned housing - at present the low-paid spend between a third and half of their income on housing.

That raising the minimum wage isn't so disastrous for the Tories' friends in big business is shown by the recent announcement of small planned increases, as George Osborne has tried to 'outflank' Ed Miliband's concern over the cost of living. Guardian diary editor Hugh Muir commented: "The chancellor's belated conversion to the cause of raising the minimum wage is a breath-holding, teeth-grinding, buttock-clenching, gravity-defying U-turn of massive proportions. Osborne, having been cheerleader for his party's view that the minimum wage is a destroyer of jobs and sapper of enterprise, now says he wants the low pay commission to raise the hourly rate from its current level of £6.31 to £7 an hour by next year" (17.1.14).

Miliband warned in a recent article: "The richest 0.1% currently have about 5% of national income - a proportion that on current trends will rise to 14% by 2030". But his own proposals are effectively just tinkering that wouldn't significantly counter low pay and inequality.

Neither Labour nor the Tories will increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without a Seattle-style campaign spreading across the country. There, Kshama Sawant, the victorious Socialist Alternative candidate was elected to the city council on a platform of calling for a city-wide minimum wage of \$15 an hour, a campaign that is escalating. The reverberation from that struggle is spreading beyond the USA, including to Britain.

WE DEMAND:

- The immediate implementation of the Living Wage as a step towards a minimum wage of £10 an hour, with regular increases to cover price rises
- No exemptions from the full minimum wage for young workers, apprentices and internships
- No deductions from the minimum wage for work-related accommodation costs
- Reverse all cuts in benefits and services and fully fund them
- The first £15,000 of income to be exempt from all tax
- End zero-hour contracts and all forced under-employment
- Investment in a massive programme to create socially useful jobs
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union negotiated rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the economy and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need



Check out the US campaign for a \$15 an hour minimum wage

15now.org

London: In 2007 420,000 people were paid below the London Living Wage. By 2012 this number had increased to 600,000, which represents 17% of all the jobs in London, pointed out London Assembly member Fiona Twycross.

Only two employers in four years have been prosecuted for paying below the national minimum wage despite more than 300,000 people in the UK earning less, a report from the Centre for London and the Trust for London revealed. Since 2009 HMRC has fined firms £2.1 million that have broken the law on pay but have rarely prosecuted.

It's the system that's ill



Paul Gerrard

Depressed? Anxious? Who wouldn't be, faced with frozen wages, job losses, benefit cuts, rocketing energy prices, etc? One in three people will experience mental health issues over a lifetime. And as austerity stretches into the foreseeable future that figure will rise.

New reports come out almost daily about growing numbers of the mentally unwell, especially among children and young people. The Prince's Trust recently revealed stark differences in mental health between those young people in employment, training or education, and the long-term unemployed.

10% of the first group had taken anti-depressants but that proportion rose to 26% among long-term unemployed people. A quarter of those in work or at college had had suicidal thoughts but nearly a third

of the unemployed had experienced them. Even a quarter of those young people who are supposedly 'sorted' have suicidal thoughts! What does that say about insecurity in capitalist Britain?

In the last three years the UK has lost 1,700 mental health beds. Increasing numbers of people admitted to hospital find the only beds are miles away from their homes, often in private hospitals. Placing patients there means friends and family can't visit, delaying patients' recovery.

It also costs the NHS a fortune, up to £4,000 a week for a private bed. Despite this Greater Manchester West Mental Health Trust, covering Salford, Bolton and Trafford, wants to close 20% of its beds over the next two years.

Meanwhile community care workers employed by Salford city council, who support people in the community and hopefully prevent hospital admissions, have been told

to expect redundancy notices in the latest avalanche of cuts. These Unison members have fought many battles with the council and are determined to fight for their jobs and their service.

Save Mental Health Services in Salford was set up to fight to keep the services. The local Unison mental health branch have funded 15,000 leaflets advertising our 29 March demo going from Eccles in Salford to Meadowbrook where a mental health ward is threatened with closure. Community care workers will steward the march and speak at the rally.

NHS cuts and council cuts make a double whammy for a vulnerable group. Salford, like many working class communities, has higher than average rates of mental illness. 36,000 people have been identified as having some form of mental illness in a population under 200,000.

Mental illness is a symptom of a sick, capitalist society which produces stress, unequal power relationships, financial insecurity, and destroys communities. It's the system that's ill, not us. Fight for a socialist system!

DEMONSTRATION TO SAVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SALFORD, BOLTON AND TRAFFORD, SATURDAY 29 MARCH, ASSEMBLE 12.30 ECCLES CROSS, CHURCH STREET, ECCLES M30 0DA

Socialist Party public meeting: 'How to fight NHS and council cuts' Immediately after the final rally. Hope Inn, 226 Eccles Old Road, Salford, M6 8AG Speakers: Sally Griffiths and Diane Cawood, NHS workers and TUSC candidates in Salford



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‘Optimistic’ Bluebirds protest

Steffan Kitka Bateman
Cardiff Socialist Party

On 22 March 3,000 Cardiff City fans protested before Cardiff played Liverpool, demanding a return to the club's blue kit and original crest and an end to billionaire Vincent Tan's undemocratic rule.

Socialists rarely oppose a change to red but Cardiff Socialist Party did as we joined the demo. We talked to fans about our demands for cheaper ticket prices and a massive increase in fan power. We sold the Socialist saying: "A working class paper for a working class club!" and sold the Socialist Party's book Reclaim the Game, which offers a fighting



programme on football.

Cardiff fans have a history of struggle, including their large contingent on an anti-racist march

which chased Welsh Defence League out of the city. The song 'My little pick and shovel' was sung on the demo, commemorating Welsh



MAY DAY
Greetings with
the **Socialist**

Over the last years we have had brilliant May Day displays in the Socialist.

Let's aim to repeat that success in 2014, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the CWI and later in the year the 50th anniversary of the first issue of our party's paper. Our 'reporters' are actively involved in the struggles they report, from workplaces, communities, universities, schools and colleges.

We report the victories that show that if you fight back you can win - from construction workers' disputes in Britain, to Lonmin miners in South Africa. And the Socialist doesn't just report workers' strikes and the anti-cuts movement, but puts forward a strategy to defeat the cuts and to fight for a socialist alternative. Help the Socialist continue that work with a May Day greeting this year.

Get a 25% discount by paying by Friday 11 April Greeting price guide: £500 for a whole page (£375 before 11 April); £300 for a half-page (£225); £170 quarter-page (£127.50); £90 one-eighth (£67.50); £50 one-sixteenth (£37.50); £30 1/32 (£22.50); £20 small box (£15). other rates are available.

Contact: **020 8988 8781** Email suzannebeishon@socialistparty.org.uk
Give your greeting online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/mayday



Thousands of campaigners marched in London on UN anti-racism day. Socialist Party members called for workers' unity against racism and austerity. Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates marched (see photo), pledging to offer an alternative to the cuts, privatisation and impoverishment of communities that might drive some to vote for racist Ukip. photo Paula Mitchell

Poverty Wage FC

The media believe the world of football begins and ends with millionaire owners and very highly paid footballers. But many football clubs including the rich top clubs pay essential ground staff such as turnstile operators, club shop workers, burger and beer sellers below the national minimum wage.

The Yorkshire and Humber TUC conference passed a resolution condemning the low pay and calling for clubs paying below the minimum wage to face fines and deduction of league points. The GMB union says it will take the campaign around the country, starting in Yorkshire.

miners' role in the 1926 general strike and City's FA cup win in 1927.

15 fan organisations united to support the Bluebirds march, one of the loudest in the city's history. At 19 minutes and 27 seconds, hundreds of fans in the stadium raised blue scarfs in the air. Despite Cardiff losing to Liverpool, fans were optimistic that a mass campaign to put pressure on the owners, the Welsh Assembly and Westminster could force big changes.

As socialists we point out that until we get rid of capitalism, football clubs will always be playthings for the rich. Fans will have to fight again to stop being forced out by increasing prices and the effects of austerity.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2014				Deadline 31 March 2014			
North West	1,200	2,069								
West Midlands	2,100	2,763								
Wales	2,300	2,472								
East Midlands	1,600	1,375								
Northern	600	470								
Yorkshire	2,900	1,872								
South West	1,400	1,181								
Southern	1,200	516								
London	6,100	2,184								
Eastern	1,200	298								
South East	750	444								
England & Wales	3,650	3,607								
TOTAL	25,000	19,251								

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Turkey: new wave of protests

Corruption and police violence exposed

Festus Okay
Ankara

In the run-up to Turkey's local elections on 30 March, tensions are rising. The way in which Prime Minister Erdogan is clinging on to power regardless of the cost is causing outrage. The death of the latest victim of police violence has triggered another mass uprising.

On 11 March, Berkin Elvan, the eighth victim of police violence, lost his fight for life. Berkin was on his way to get bread for breakfast on 16 June when he was hit in the head by a pepper-spray round. His murderers, just like other perpetrators of state violence, are still free.

As the tragic news came through, another wave of anger at the government and at Erdogan spread throughout Turkey. Demonstrations were called for the evening. But people began to gather in the morning.

For example, a man carried out a sit-down protest on the steps leading into a park in the centre of Ankara. He sat down on the steps with a piece of bread and waited silently for hours. Within a short time, many people gathered around him. By the afternoon, there were several thousand.

At the same time, students in many universities boycotted lectures and made their way to the city centre. A group of 5,000 students were attacked on their way by the police.

Although the demonstration was not due to start until 6.30pm, there were thousands of people at the location by 3pm. University students, school students, industrial workers, office staff, left groups, Kurds and Alawites all joined together to chant: "The murderous state must be brought to account", "Berkin's murderer is the AKP's police" or "Erdogan, murderer!"

By the time the police attacked from all sides, it was not even 6pm yet. The crowd ran into the clouds of smoke which blocked their escape routes and quickly covered the whole square. Running through traffic in the surrounding streets, people tried to protect their heads from the hails of gas pellets coming down from above, while running away.

It all happened in a matter of seconds. Cries could be heard, as well as the sounds of coughing and panicking people. After running for a while, the crowd had dispersed everywhere. A kind of running battle developed between the police and some young protesters, and continued late into the night.

The following day, 11 March, Berkin was buried. Hundreds of thousands of people attended his funeral in Istanbul. Directly after the burial of the youngest victim of the 'Gezi rebellion', there were further acts of police terror. The crowd was attacked with the same methods and more street battles with the police took place. Many people were injured and arrested.

Corruption

Since the Gezi uprising, nothing has been the way it was before. Erdogan's reputation as being invincible has been severely damaged by week-long mass protests. In addition to this, there were a number of revelations of major corruption scandals which led to the resignation of four of his ministers.



Hundreds of thousands have taken part in protests across the country

Behind these revelations, which caused a crisis of the state, is a bitter struggle between the government and its former ally, the 'Gülen network', named after the preacher Fetullah Gülen. He lives in the USA and represents a section of the Turkish bourgeoisie, through which the network has influence in key areas of the police and justice system.

While the government and the Gülen network, which Erdogan refers to as a "parallel state", trade blows, more dirt is coming to the surface. Every day new audio recordings of conversations are revealed, making the scale of the scandal ever clearer.

In one of these recordings, a telephone conversation between Erdogan and his son, Erdogan is heard informing his son about a police raid on the sons of ministers and advising him to remove money from his home. It is clear from the conversation that the money belongs to Erdogan and that the sums in question are very large. After further phone calls, Erdogan's son tells the prime minister that only the 'small' sum of €30 million remained.

There is a strong opposition against Erdogan. As he is fearful that his opponents - the working class or sections of the ruling class - will hold him to account, Erdogan cannot afford to back down.

New laws give him control over the justice system. Investigations against army generals and members of the MIT intelligence services cannot be terminated without his permission. A new telecommunications body gives Erdogan the opportunity for easier censorship - as with his recent banning of Twitter.

Capitalist divisions

There is a re-alignment underway among the ruling class. Until recently, the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) was part of a common front with the Gülen network and the employers' associations - the so-called Anatolian capitalists. The Kemalist opposition party, the CHP (Republican People's Party), the military and the association of the old capitalists, TÜSIAD, made up the opposing front.

It was the AKP which gained significant support in 2010 from a wide spectrum of left-liberal intellectuals and layers of society, because it stood up against the power of the military. In this context, a large number of people, including former members of the army general staff, were arrested and tried in the



The latest protests were sparked by the death of 15 year old Berkin Elvan

so-called Ergenekon trials, and last summer were sentenced to life in prison.

While Erdogan cast himself as a kind of public prosecutor, the CHP styled itself as the defence lawyer in this dispute. Now it is becoming clear that the wind can turn in the completely opposite direction, when the power of the ruling class is at stake.

Erdogan's future

Confronted with an increasingly radicalised mass movement and a new alliance of the Gülen movement and the CHP, the AKP is jumping into bed with the army and state forces.

At the same time, Erdogan is trying to shore up his base by means of fostering division. During one of his election rallies, Erdogan called Berkin a terrorist and incited the audience to boo the victim's mother.

One thing is certain: The question is not if, but when Erdogan will go. There is already a crisis of the state and the legal system is widely seen as bankrupt. President Abdullah Gul challenged Erdogan's ban of Twitter after the prime minister said he would "wipe out" the service, which he claims spread allegations of corruption in his ruling circles.

Many people speculate whether the elections at the end of March will take place or not. The government is trying to use censorship, increased state violence and undemocratic laws to sustain its power. It is preparing a major offensive, not just against the movement, but also against the opposing faction of the capitalist class.

Despite the fact that the opposi-

tion is becoming more radicalised by the day, the AKP still retains the largest support among the population, not least because of the relative stability of the economy. But they will suffer losses. The question is how much their vote will decrease by. It is very likely that there will be an early general election. Only this could temporarily calm the situation because people will adopt a "wait and see" attitude.

Neither has the government taken steps to improve the rights of the Kurds. But, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) has given the government until the elections to act. So Erdogan's ability to play the divide and rule card has been undermined.

The left

The left is on the front line of the protest movement but its lack of political perspectives and programme prevents it from giving the movement clear direction. It is an accurate summary to say that the left embraced the movement but the masses have not yet embraced the left. However it is possible that there could be new developments in this regard after the local elections.

These polls will be the first stage of significant political events which will play out in Turkey over the next few months and even years. It is vital that the left is built in this process, so workers and youth find the best possible way to build the workers' movement. Marxist ideas are needed in this process to build towards a mass party, rooted in the working class, to show a way out of the nightmare of capitalism and repression.

The Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



Taiwan: Parliament occupied by protesters

Oppose the capitalist trade deal - build a mass workers' movement

James Langdon, CWI Taiwan



Mexico: Freedom for Nestora Salgado!

Social activist imprisoned for role in community self-defence against drug cartels and corrupt state forces

socialistworld.net



Hong Kong: The fight for women's rights

Sexism, discriminatory laws and poverty hit women hard in China's richest city

Sally Tang Mei-ching and Vincent Kolo

Adventures in bedroom tax land

Karen Fletcher
Barnsley

As we are coming up to the first anniversary of the introduction of the bedroom tax I thought it would be a good time to look at my year. I have not made any of this up.

I knew we were affected but I did not appreciate the impact of this idiotic tax. I honestly believe it is the single most mindless act of legislative stupidity I have come across.

On my birthday I attended my first bedroom tax meeting. The meeting was well supported and included one of my local councillors. I admit I was not impressed by what he had to say.

From this moment on the campaign owned me. I cancelled my rent direct debit and asked for a payment card. Three weeks later I had no payment card but I was the proud owner of a Notice of Intent to Seek Possession (NOSP). For the princely sum of £74. My totally weekly rent is actually £81. It took another four weeks and umpteen phone calls before I finally got a payment card.

Eviction order

As I am disabled having a card that required me to find a pay-point every week was not a sensible choice on my part. Standing in a queue when you have arthritis and fibromyalgia is not really an option. It soon became clear that this was not working and in October I ended up in the local County Court with an eviction order.

I have no problems with how my individual case was dealt with insofar as I got the adjournment I sought. It was based purely on the grounds that I had put in an appeal against the imposition of the bedroom tax based on tribunal decisions over the preceding months. What concerned me was the blanket rulings that affected all those present that day. 14 cases were heard in less than 90 minutes. Nothing was discussed.

I decided I needed to consult a local solicitor and as the duty solicitor had



Bedroom Tax - legislative stupidity photo Lash

been quite good I figured the same firm would serve me well. I walked into the office and tried to explain my concerns about the way the court had handled the 14 cases and that a repeat of that was unacceptable.

The solicitor was one of those people who decide why you are there and what is good for you. In this case my tribunal, but as it had only got as far as a letter of acknowledgement and any hearing was months away I made my excuses and left.

We now move on to 28 January and the date of my adjourned hearing. I arrived at the court in plenty of time to see the duty solicitor. It was the same one I had seen and rejected a month earlier. I spoke to her anyway. I said I just wanted an adjournment... and that was as far as I got before she lit into me.

Apparently she doesn't "just do adjournments". Anyway she eventually toddled off to speak to the representative from the council. When she eventually reappeared I was told

that my case had been withdrawn. I asked her what that meant and her response was (and I quote) "it means it has been withdrawn".

So that was enlightening. I didn't know why it had been withdrawn or what happened to the NOSP. I could guess but that was hardly the point.

Case withdrawn

I'd arranged for another Socialist Party member to act as my McKenzie Friend in court. The journey was not easy as she has mobility problems. So it would have been polite to tell me beforehand that the case had been withdrawn. The council or the Almo could have done me the courtesy of a phone call. How many people spent a considerable proportion of their meagre benefits getting to court? When your income is £70 a week then £4 is a lot of money to waste on bus fares.

When I got home from court I rang the council to find out where I

stood on the question of the NOSP. This was one of the funniest conversations I have had in a long time. I was told that the NOSP would not be withdrawn because when it was issued there was rent outstanding.

Finally I was asked to answer the yes or no question of was I in arrears on the date the NOSP was issued?

When I replied 'no' I was told I was delusional.

I am now in the position that, as I qualified for exemption from the bedroom tax under the 1996 rule, I am having to fight for the money to be paid back to me and not put on my rent account. The same goes for the DHP they owe me.

Rules?

This should be a simple process. Not on your life! On the one hand the local authority is tasking staff to ring people and arrange payment while at the same time they are sending letters stating that they are acting within social security rules by putting the outstanding amount on my rent account. They can't even agree on the amount outstanding.

If I have it on my rent account it amounts to almost double what I am owed in cash. Apparently the cash amount is reduced because I am in arrears. I am really not sure how to be in arrears on a debt I don't even owe!

I also have to start the appeals process regarding housing benefit reduction for so-called spare rooms from the very beginning.

Confused! You have no idea

The Socialist Party says:

- Scrap the bedroom tax and write off all the debt
- Defend all those who cannot or will not pay
- No evictions for rent arrears due to the tax or austerity cuts. Build an anti-eviction army
- End all cuts – tax the bankers and the billionaires not bedrooms
- For a major programme of new council house building to meet social need
- Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the 22 May local elections to fight for councillors who would rule out eviction for bedroom tax and fight the cuts

Bristol council Voting for cuts, voting for careers

Robin Clapp

Bristol council minutes show that in 2013 only one Labour councillor opposed the cuts budget. They don't explain that he did so accidentally, by pressing the wrong electronic button.

This year he mastered the new system and so Labour's support for the £91 million cuts package was unanimous.

Even up to 48 hours before the meeting one or two of them were sidling up to us in the Socialist Party and whispering that the Mayor had 'gone too far' and their leader was 'out of touch'.

They claimed the Labour Group was being corralled into submission by bullying with even the threat of legal actions from a party minder.

Would the worms turn?

Given these particular characters, that was never going to be the most likely outcome.

Threats of subsequent deselection for having defied the whip



The launch of TUSC in Bristol last year photo Bristol SP

would no doubt have intimidated some of them. But these days there's also the considerable loss of dosh to

consider.

So far better to revert to nodding dog pose and put those lingering

principles back into the box where they've been gathering dust for decades.

But then along comes a chance to show they can be after all a rather radical bunch when there's nothing at stake.

Tony Benn

Following the death of former local MP Tony Benn, a book of condolence has been opened by the council.

Hundreds of ordinary Bristolians have already signed, but jostling them out of the way and determined to be caught by the television cameras, are those same Labour councillors who by their recent actions support everything that Benn opposed.

On 22 May the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will stand against every one of these scoundrels and their Tory, Lib Dem and Green friends with whom they seem to enjoy such banter in the council chamber.

Socialism TODAY

The Socialist Party's magazine

The March issue includes:

Britain: A gloomy economic outlook
Hannah Sell

Ukraine: The forces behind the crisis
Rob Jones, in Moscow

Bedroom Tax victory
Philip Stott and Richard Neville
Socialist Party Scotland

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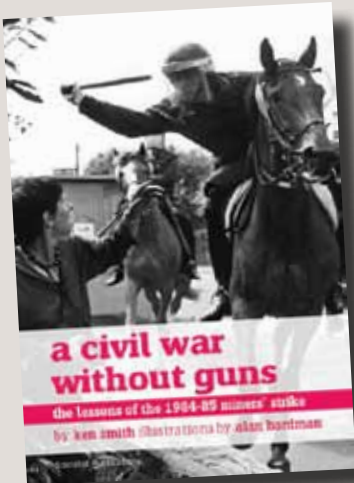
The great miners' strike 1984-85

A civil war without guns

by Ken Smith

£8 (postage included)

The Socialist Party's history of the 1984-85 miners' strike, *A Civil War Without Guns*, by Ken Smith, has been reprinted with a new introduction for the 30th anniversary of this colossal struggle.



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The Battle of Orgreave

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition public meeting.
Film 'The Battle of Orgreave', followed by a discussion on the theme: Fighting then! Fighting against cuts! Fighting for justice!
Saturday 29 March, 2pm. Rio Cinema, 107 Kingsland High Street, Dalston, London E8 2PB.
Entrance £7/ £5 concessions, £4 under-18s.

TUSC AGAINST CUTS



As part of a series of articles celebrating the 30th anniversary of the 1984 miners' strike, we have two reminiscences by ex-miners who were among the 500 miners who joined the Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party. Ian Whitehouse was in Yorkshire, one of the strongest areas of the strike. Steve Minney was one of a brave minority of Nottinghamshire miners who were on strike.

We fought with every means

Ian Whitehouse
Sheffield Socialist Party

I left school in 1979, the year Thatcher came to power. It wasn't the last time our paths crossed. After an apprenticeship with the National Coal Board at Highmoor colliery, by 1984 I was a qualified underground maintenance fitter working on coalface machinery. I was looking forward to marrying my girlfriend, getting a house and starting a family.

I thought I had a secure future. The NUM miners' union was the vanguard of the working class. The government took us on at their peril, as they discovered in 1972 and 1974.

One day shift, on entering the canteen, our branch secretary Austin Fairhurst introduced us to four flying pickets from Cortonwood, the first Yorkshire pit threatened with closure without going through the consultation procedure.

Within minutes we had a unanimous show of hands. That was the last time I went through Highmoor's gates for a year. We knew it would be hard fighting the government but we didn't realise we would also have to do battle with the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC.

Many people came up trumps, people like Sharon from my Socialist Party branch who went around Sheffield's pubs, shaking a tin, collecting money for the miners. Or the pensioner who sent in a fiver a week from her pension that she couldn't really afford. These people keep you going.

We had laughs. At one private mine that was still turning coal, we got into the offices. My mate picked up a phone and threw it through the window. Suddenly someone

shouts 'what about fingerprints?' My mate says, bloody hell yes, and wipes his hands on his shirt.

The police were at best obstructive and at worst like storm troopers. If the tactics used to stop ordinary people moving around the country were employed in any other country the British government would be up in arms about restricting people's human rights but it's different for the 'enemy within'.

We fought with every means we could but were totally up against it without the support of the Labour Party and TUC. They should bow their heads in shame. The working class have had zero-hour contracts, lost paid holidays and sick pay all due to the weakening of unions' standing in the workplace.

Big positives came out of the miners' strike. The 'Women Against Pit Closures' movement empowered women of the coalfields to express their drive and commitment to the cause and go on later to further education and to fulfil their ambitions in many ways. The strike, though, took its toll on relationships. People were evicted from their homes. Families were split with strikers and scabs in the same villages.

At the end we went back march-

ing behind banners and bands. Some said it made them proud to see it, but for me every step was forced, every minute of the march took an hour. It seemed the vanguard had become the vanquished.

So what can we do in the future? Little things help people get through industrial action. Go up to picket lines and give your support. Write to local papers to support comrades on strike. Don't cross picket lines even if it's not your dispute, even a blast on a car horn as you pass a picket line helps.

The Tories, with the help of Labour's leadership, shut pits, ripped the heart from communities and stripped pride from the people. Don't let it happen to anyone else. La lutte continue!

Against the stream

Steve Minney

In 1984 I was a naive 19 year old working at Hucknall mine in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. I'd already been at a union school where branch officials brought guests from the South Wales area. So the talk was about the destruction the Tory government was planning on the coal industry.

In March 1984 the Broad Left of Notts NUM organised a meeting which agreed to place a picket on the nightshift at various Notts pits in support of the Yorkshire area. The nightshift picket was successful. The day shift was different which is why the coal strike was different in Notts. There was a cosy relationship between branch officials and management. So on that day-shift picket, branch officials waved members to cross the picket lines.

Police were flown in from Hampshire and Manchester, then the Met came. The county of Notts became a siege location where major roads inward were patrolled especially in

the north of the county to stop flying pickets. Any car suspected of carrying a picket, especially a male occupant, would be turned back. The Met police, with no attachment to the area or people, would not hold back with their aggressive actions.

In Yorkshire the NUM could use welfare facilities as their area backed the strike. In Notts we had to organise in a pub where the landlord supported us. The strikers' first meeting organised a committee to collect finance for strikers in 18 pits where the majority worked. An area strike committee, along with other unions, organised financial aid and donations of food and other household items.

At Linby mine, the local Labour Party let us use their building to hold meetings, a soup kitchen and a central location during the strike. That wouldn't happen in Labour today. A financial hardship committee was set up as striking miners were not entitled to any benefit, only living through donations. People in the

Nottingham Building Society were threatened with eviction due to non-payment whereas building societies in Yorkshire, where a good majority were on strike, showed them more leniency.

Notts area NUM had a history of scabbing against the national union due to the union being run on federal lines. The Thatcher government's policy was to maintain production of coal in the Notts area while bringing foreign coal into the country. At the docks members from other unions would not unload coal or transport it on trains and some faced the sack for this action.

The Tory government sent its agents into Notts to orchestrate a working miners' committee. They wanted to sway public reaction that these people were being intimidated into not crossing picket lines. At area level officials were wined and dined to speak out against the strike but the main objective was to cause a breakaway union as had happened in Notts in the 1920s.

The 1984 strike saw the formation

of the scab Union of Democratic Miners (UDM). The courts ruled that anyone who wanted to be in the NUM had to sign out of the scab union. All the Notts NUM property and buildings went straight to this rabble.

Over the years documents have been released on the 1984 miners' strike. Recently we heard that the government used the Army to transport coal. The figures of miners returning to work were falsified. I remember watching the news saying the figures were going up 'about 500 today and 12,000 for the week'. In spring 1985, the union voted to return to work without agreement.

Sadly we now find out how close we were to victory. At the beginning of the strike 20% of Notts miners were out on strike, at the end there were 22%. This shows striking Notts NUM members' commitment to their union keeping their livelihoods and communities. Since the strike Nottinghamshire towns have become ghost towns. When we meet up I have never heard one regret from those on strike in 1984.

PROBATION WORKERS' ACTION CAN DEFEAT PRIVATISATION

Chas Berry

Kent Napo branch chair, personal capacity

As we go to press, probation workers in Napo are preparing for a second national strike against privatisation from 31 March to 1 April. Pressure is piling up on Secretary of State Chris Grayling from across the justice sector.

On 1 April, lawyers in the Justice Alliance will take protest action and join us in rallies across the country as part of their campaign against Legal Aid cuts. At the same time prison officers in the POA, already at boiling point over staff cuts and pension changes, have been urged to support us and prepare for a coordinat-

ed response to Grayling's disastrous plans for resettlement prisons.

If further confirmation were needed of how out of touch Grayling is, it came with recent news that prisoners are now banned from receiving books sent in by relatives! This is because of new rules introduced to encourage compliance with a 'tougher' prison regime. But it is yet another example of how Tory headline-grabbing measures will ultimately work against his declared aim of a 'rehabilitation revolution.'

Napo members have now been involved in a year-long battle against Transforming Rehabilitation (TR/privatisation) their determination in previous strikes has shown we can defeat this vicious Con-Dem government.

Living with the stress and anxiety of TR has not been easy but I say this:

- **It's not too late.** Staff assignments are complete and Trusts are being wound up but no jobs have yet gone to the private sector. We cannot stop the 'split' but we can keep the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) in the public sector by delaying and preventing share sale.
- **We're winning.** TR is in meltdown. There has already been a two month delay and there are serious

concerns about whether it can be delivered before the general election. Striking will put further pressure on TR delivery.

- **Private providers are nervous.** Companies that thought they could make quick money are now questioning whether they will be able to make 'rehabilitation' pay. If they were expecting a compliant workforce that they could cut easily, we need to press home the message that we will not roll over.
- **It works.** Talks broke down last year over the staff transfer scheme. Our action on 5 No-

vember brought Grayling back to the negotiating table. We won a National Framework Agreement that gives most staff seven years protection of service continuity.

- **We're right.** We've said all along that TR places the public at risk and we are being proved right. As the bureaucratic TR processes begin to take hold we cannot allow chaos and disintegration to undermine and demoralise the workforce. Striking will unite us once again and show the public we are determined to put their safety first.



photo Paul Mattsson

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, pay, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'Free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'Workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade

unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party! Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!